

HENRY, C. L.

Proposed ANNEXATION  
HAWAII

1898



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PROPOSED ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. CHARLES L. HENRY,  
OF INDIANA,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

MONDAY, JUNE 13, 1898.

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WASHINGTON.

1898.

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S P E E C H  
OF  
HON. CHARLES L. HENRY.

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The House having under consideration the joint resolution (H. Res. 350) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States—

Mr. HENRY of Indiana said:

Mr. SPEAKER: We are gravely told that the proposition presented by the resolution for the annexation of Hawaii is the commencement of a new policy of the United States for the acquisition of colonial territory. It is said that following this will come the annexation of the Philippine Islands, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, and that finally the nation will so extend her boundaries that it will fall by reason of the fact that so many diverse nationalities are brought under the flag that our republican form of government can not possibly be maintained. All this sounds like an echo from the past.

The prophets of evil who so loudly declaim upon the disasters and woes which are to come if we pass these resolutions are but the lineal successors of those who told the people of this country in former years, when annexations of territory were being discussed, that evil and destruction must surely follow. Men even stood up and solemnly declared that any such annexation as that of Florida or Louisiana would be sufficient cause for severance of the bonds of union between the States.

It would be profitable, if time would permit, to call to mind in detail the various objections that have been urged in the years past to each and every proposition of annexation which has been before the American people. Not one argument has been advanced in the course of this debate against the annexation of Hawaii that was not made when former annexations of territory were under consideration. Grave statesmen then, as now, in-

sisted that the boundaries of the United States should not be extended, that compactness of territory was necessary, that it would not do to annex any territory where the inhabitants were not homogeneous and suited to American citizenship, that to commence the extension of our boundaries meant aggrandizement and would surely weaken the bonds of our Union.

A careful perusal of the history of the past will soon satisfy anyone that in the opposition to this resolution nothing new has been developed. To assert and reassert that the action proposed is a departure from the traditions of the fathers is no argument. Look, if you please, at the small territory covered originally by the thirteen colonies and compare it with the vast extent of territory now embraced within the boundaries of the United States. Remember that the original small territory has grown to the present vast expanse by no other means whatever than annexation.

Remember that Florida was annexed by purchase from Spain; that Louisiana, with the great Northwest, was secured in like manner from France; that a vast expanse of territory came to us by conquest from Mexico; that Texas was admitted into the sisterhood of States after she had secured her independence from Mexico; that icebound Alaska was ceded to us by Russia, and that in each and every case the people of the United States were told that it was unconstitutional and would prove ruinous to the country.

It has been well said that our territory to-day is smaller in comparison with the population than it was a half century ago. The territory now proposed to be annexed by these resolutions is indeed very small in extent, but its position makes it very important to the United States. So important has it always been considered, from the time it was first brought to the attention of the American people, more than half a century ago, that at no time since then has it been thought possible that this nation would allow these islands to drift into the hands of any foreign nation.

It is remarkable as well as interesting that a close study of the history of the last fifty years will not disclose a single line or a single word from any of the Presidents of the United States or the Secretaries of State upon this subject, that looks for one moment with favor upon the idea that any foreign nation should be allowed to control these islands in the Pacific Ocean, which we

now propose to annex, and yet, Mr. Speaker, during the course of this debate it has been asserted over and over again that this policy is a new one, and that it is but the commencement of a proposed colonial policy. Gentlemen who make these statements have closed their eyes to the history of their country.

Allow me to call your attention to some of the expressions of Presidents and their Secretaries of State. In 1843 Daniel Webster, as Secretary of State under President Tyler, said:

The United States \* \* \* are more interested in the fate of the islands and of their Government than any other nation can be, and this consideration induces the President to be quite willing to declare, as the sense of the Government of the United States, that the Government of the Sandwich Islands ought to be respected; that no power ought either to take possession of the islands as a conquest or for the purpose of colonization, and that no power ought to seek for any undue control over the existing Government, or any exclusive privileges or preferences in matters of commerce.

In 1843 Secretary of State Legare, in a dispatch to Edward Everett, minister at London, said:

It is well known that \* \* \* we have no wish to plant or to acquire colonies abroad. Yet there is something so entirely peculiar in the relations between this little commonwealth, Hawaii, and ourselves that we might even feel justified, consistently with our own principles, in interfering by force to prevent its falling into the hands of one of the great powers of Europe.

In 1843 James Buchanan, in a dispatch to our minister at Honolulu, said:

We ardently desire that the Hawaiian Islands may maintain their independence. It would be highly injurious to our interests if, tempted by their weakness, they should be seized by Great Britain or France; more especially so since our recent acquisitions from Mexico on the Pacific Ocean.

In 1850 Secretary of State Clayton, in a dispatch to our minister at Paris, said:

If, however, in your judgment it should be warranted by circumstances, you may take a proper opportunity to intimate to the minister for foreign affairs of France that the situation of the Sandwich Islands, in respect to our possessions on the Pacific, and the bonds commercial and of other descriptions between them and the United States are such that we could never, with indifference, allow them to pass under the dominion or exclusive control of any other power.

In 1854 Secretary of State Marcy, in his special instructions to our minister at Honolulu, said:

In your general instructions you were furnished with the views of this Government in regard to any change in the political affairs of the Sandwich Islands. The President was aware, when those instructions were prepared, that the question of transferring the sovereignty of those islands to the United States had been raised and favorably received by many influential individuals residing therein. It was foreseen that at some period, not far

distant, such a change would take place, and that the Hawaiian Islands would come under the protectorate of or be transferred to some foreign power.

You were informed that it was not the policy of the United States to accelerate such a change; but if, in the course of events, it became unavoidable, this Government would much prefer to acquire the sovereignty of these islands for the United States rather than to see it transferred to any other power. If any foreign connection is to be formed, the geographical position of these islands indicates that it should be with us. Our commerce with them far exceeds that of all other countries; our citizens are embarked in the most important business concerns of that country, and some of them hold important public positions. In view of the large American interests there established and the intimate commercial relations existing at this time, it might be well regarded as the duty of this Government to prevent these islands from becoming the appendage of any other foreign power.

Allow me to call the attention of gentlemen who claim that the annexation of Hawaii is a new proposition to the words of Secretary Marcy in these instructions: He clearly sets out that the Hawaiian Islands can not long remain a separate power and that the United States would much prefer to annex them, rather than to see them transferred to any other power. This statement was gravely made in an official communication forty-four years ago.

Mr. CLARK of Missouri. Will it disturb my friend to ask him one question?

Mr. HENRY of Indiana. I think not.

Mr. CLARK of Missouri. Do you know the purpose William L. Marcy had in the annexation of the Sandwich Islands was to increase the slave territory of the United States? Was not that the whole thing they were after?

Mr. HENRY of Indiana. I think that was not the whole thing they wanted, but that he contemplated if they were annexed they would become slave territory.

But, Mr. Speaker, the annexation of slave territory to the United States is no longer a bugaboo to the people of this country. That question is settled, settled by the war, now more than a quarter of a century past. Moreover, if Mr. Marcy's opinion was the only one favoring annexation there would be some force in the suggestion of the gentleman from Missouri; but let us look further and see what others have said on the subject. After the close of the civil war, and slavery had been abolished, that great Secretary of State, William H. Seward, in a communication to our minister at Honolulu, said:

Second. You will be governed in all your proceedings by a proper respect and courtesy to the Government and people of the Sandwich Islands; but it



is proper that you should know, for your own information, that a lawful and peaceful annexation of the islands to the United States, with the consent of the people of the Sandwich Islands, is deemed desirable by this Government; and that if the policy of annexation should really conflict with the policy of reciprocity, annexation is in every case to be preferred.

In 1888, during the first Democratic Administration after the close of the war, Thomas F. Bayard, then Secretary of State, said in referring to the reciprocity treaty negotiated in 1875:

It was my idea that the policy originating in the Fish treaty of the Grant Administration in 1875 should be permitted to work out its proper results. The obvious course was to wait quietly and patiently and let the islands fill up with American planters and American industries until they should be wholly identified in business interests and political sympathies with the United States. It was simply a matter of waiting until the apple should ripen and fall.

Mr. Speaker, I might give many more quotations of the same character, but I will content myself with these, which cover more than half a century, and show that the Secretaries of State during all that time have advocated and looked forward to the annexation of these islands. And now, Mr. Speaker, in the language of Mr. Bayard, "the apple has ripened and has fallen," and the American people propose to take it up and put it in the basket.

Mr. GAINES. We do not want sour apples.

Mr. HENRY of Indiana. No; we do not want sour apples, nor do the American people want that disposition that will make those apples sour whether sweet or not.

What are the conditions to-day? Has the apple ripened, has it fallen, and is it ready to be taken up and put into the American basket? The American policy regarding Hawaii has always been that it should not be allowed to pass under the control of a foreign power, and that in good time it should become a part of American territory.

The total population of the islands, according to the census of 1896, is 109,090, distributed as follows:

Native Hawaiians.....	31,000
Japanese .....	24,400
Portuguese.....	15,100
Chinese.....	21,600
Part Hawaiian and part foreign blood.....	8,400
Americans .....	3,000
British.....	2,200
German .....	1,400
Norwegian and French.....	479
All other nationalities.....	1,055

The proportion of the various kinds of population is as follows:

	Per cent.
Native Hawaiian .....	28
Japanese .....	22
Chinese .....	20
Americans, and Europeans by birth or descent .....	22
Mixed blood .....	8

Much has been said about the Chinese and Japanese portion of the population, but it seems to me that what has been stated on that subject as an argument against the annexation of Hawaii is strong argument in favor of this annexation. It does not follow because there is a large amount of cheap labor in Hawaii, represented by the Japanese and Chinese, that its annexation to the United States will increase or continue this kind of labor upon the islands, or that any of this cheap labor will be transferred to any other United States territory. Upon the contrary, the policy of the United States is firmly fixed upon the question of cheap Mongolian labor.

Under the new treaty with Japan, commencing with the year 1899, the United States will have the right to control importation of cheap Japanese labor, and we have already solved the question, so far as the Chinese are concerned. It is evident, therefore, that by a strict enforcement of United States laws against Chinese and Japanese immigration into the Sandwich Islands it will be but a few years until the Japanese and Chinese population now in the islands will be decreased, and they will no longer be an important factor upon the islands.

Of the Portuguese population, about one-half have been born on the islands and have been educated in the English language under American influences, and by those who have visited the islands we are told that these people are very industrious and do not form an undesirable portion of the population. They readily acquire American habits, understand American institutions, and have availed themselves of the opportunities to educate their children in American schools. So strong has been the American influence in the islands that their schools have been patterned after the systems of the States, in which the English language is taught and learned by all.

Americans in the islands own nearly all the property and have practically made them an American community. The population

is much more favorable to American institutions than was the population of Florida when it became a part of the United States territory, and when Louisiana was annexed to the United States her population was not nearly so suited for American citizenship as to-day are the people of the Islands of Hawaii. But we are told that these islands are so far from our shores that they can not be made a part of the country without requiring us to go to great expense in protecting them.

Mr Speaker, distance is no longer measured by miles, but by the time required to travel it. Measured in this way, Hawaii to-day is nearer to us than was California when we acquired that territory, and much nearer than Alaska when Russia ceded it to us. It is only about six days' travel by ordinary steamer from our western coast, and nearly twice as far to the shores of any other nation. Hawaii is indeed geographically a part of the United States. Her position only about one-third of the way across the great Pacific makes her a natural outpost for our western coast. This was the controlling reason that has led all of our statesmen in recent years past to the one conclusion that no foreign nation should ever be allowed to occupy the Hawaiian Islands.

From a military and naval point of view these islands are necessary to the protection of our western coast. All of our military and naval authorities have uniformly advocated the acquisition of these islands. A careful examination of their utterances from time to time will disclose that not a single one of them has ever held the view that the islands ought not to become a part of the United States. I shall not take up the time of the House in quoting from the various opinions of our naval and military men, but will content myself with calling attention to the opinions of General Schofield, as expressed in a letter written last January to Senator MORGAN, upon this subject. It so clearly states the situation that I beg to read it all as a part of my remarks:

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA., *January 13, 1898.*

MY DEAR SENATOR: In compliance with the request contained in your letter of January 9, I do not hesitate to write you without reserve in respect to my views upon the pending question of annexation of the Hawaiian Islands.

From the time, twenty-five years ago, when I made a personal examination for the purpose of ascertaining the value of those islands to this country for military and naval purposes, I have always regarded ultimate annexation of the islands to this country as a public necessity. But the time when this

should be accomplished had to depend on natural political development. In the meantime our national interests should be secured by the exclusive right to occupy, improve, and fortify Pearl River Harbor so as to insure our possession of that harbor in time of war.

To illustrate my views on this subject, I have likened that harbor to a commanding position in front of a defensive line which an army in the field is compelled to occupy. The army must occupy that advanced position and hold it at whatever cost, or else the enemy will occupy it with his artillery and thus dominate the main line. If we do not occupy and fortify Pearl River Harbor, our enemy will occupy it as a base from which to conduct operations against our Pacific coast and the isthmian canal, which must of course in due time be constructed and controlled by this country. The possession of such a base at a convenient distance from our Pacific coast would be a great temptation to an unfriendly nation to undertake hostile operations against us.

One of the greatest advantages of Pearl River Harbor to us consists in the fact that no navy would be required to defend it. It is a deep, land-locked arm of the sea, easily defended by fortifications placed near its mouth, with its anchorage beyond the reach of guns from the ocean. Cruisers or other war ships which might be overpowered at sea, as well as merchant vessels, would find there behind the land defenses absolute security against a naval attack. A moderate garrison of regular troops, with the militia on the island, would give sufficient protection against any landing parties from a hostile fleet. Of course an army on transports, supported by a powerful fleet, could land and capture the place, but that would be an expensive operation, one much less likely to be undertaken than the occupation of an undefended harbor, as a necessary preliminary to an attack on our coast or upon our commerce.

The value of such a place of refuge and of supplies for our merchant marine and our cruisers in time of war can hardly be overestimated, yet the greatest value to us of that wonderful harbor consists in the fact that its possession and adequate defense by us prevents the possibility of an enemy using it against us.

So far as I know, the leading statesmen, no less than the military and naval authorities of this country, have always been in accord on this subject. While it has not been proposed to interfere with the continued occupation by foreign nations of their military strongholds in this hemisphere, it has been publicly and emphatically declared that none of those strongholds shall ever be allowed to pass into the possession of any other nation whose interests might be antagonistic to ours. Now for the first time the occasion has arisen to carry into effect our long-declared national policy. A little State like Hawaii can not stand alone among the great nations, all of whom covet her incomparable harbor. She must have the protection of this country or some other great nation. But a protectorate without sovereignty is the last thing this country could afford to assume. In the absence of authority to regulate and control the intercourse between the islands and other countries controversies must arise which would lead to war or to the loss of our invaluable military possession in the islands. No halfway measures will suffice. We must accept the islands and hold and govern them or else let some other great nation do it. To fail now to carry into effect our own great national policy upon the first occasion offered to us would, in my judgment, be one of those blunders which are worse than crimes.

To my mind what may be regarded perhaps as the sentimental aspect of the question is entitled to consideration. A colony of intelligent, virtuous, and patriotic Americans have rescued a country from barbarism and raised it to a high state of civilization and prosperity, until in the natural course of

events the government of that country has fallen entirely into their hands. They now ask the privilege of adding that country to their own native land, of returning with their new possessions to the parental fold. Can they be turned away to seek a home among strangers? Not without violating one of the most sacred laws of nature and incurring the penalty which must, sooner or later, necessarily follow.

I am, dear Senator, with great respect, sincerely yours,

J. M. SCHOFIELD.

HON. JOHN T. MORGAN,  
*United States Senate, Washington, D. C.*

can add nothing to the convincing argument presented in this letter.

Criticism has been offered from time to time in this debate to the effect that this is an attempt to annex the Hawaiian Islands under the pretense of a war measure. Mr. Speaker, the passage of these resolutions is not a war measure. As I have already shown, for more than half a century this nation has held that we are more interested in the Hawaiian Islands than any other nation, that they must ultimately become a part of the United States.

Twenty-five years ago General Schofield examined the islands with a view to determine their usefulness from a naval and military point of view. Three times treaties have been negotiated for the annexation of the islands, first in 1854, next in 1893, and last in 1897. At the time each of these three treaties was negotiated no idea of the war with Spain entered into the minds of the contracting parties. Mr. Speaker, the only bearing which the present war has upon the question is that it is like a great searchlight which has been turned upon the question and brought it more clearly to the attention of the American people.

As soon as it was understood that Admiral Dewey was to attack the Spanish fleet at Manila every American could but ask the question: "How can we succor him in case of defeat, or how can we reinforce him in the event of victory?" Anticipating the needs of the hour, the Government of the United States piled up coal at Honolulu for the use of our vessels, and to-day, when we are sending reinforcements to Dewey, not one of our vessels could sail from San Francisco to Manila without stopping at Honolulu to take on additional coal. Suppose, Mr. Speaker, that to-day Hawaii were hostile to us, or even neutral, with no right within her harbors, how could we succor our brave seamen in Manila Bay?

But we are told that Pearl Harbor now belongs to this nation and that there is nothing else on the island that we need for naval purposes. Without stopping to discuss this question, I beg to call attention to one controlling fact so clearly set forth in the testimony of General Schofield when he appeared before our Committee on Foreign Affairs, and that is that even if we had Pearl Harbor, in case of hostilities, with the Government of the islands unfriendly, it would be easy to land a military force and capture the harbor from within; but if the islands are in our possession, a small force of soldiers in addition to the fortifications at the mouth of the harbor would enable us to hold it against all comers.

Pearl Harbor, landlocked as it is, fortified at its entrance and protected by our possession of the islands themselves, would give to our Navy, in time of war, absolute security from a navy even of superior strength. Looking at it from the enemy's point of view, the islands are of much greater importance to us. As ships are now constructed, no nation from the East can send its ships across the Pacific and attack our western coast without having a base of supplies and a place from which to operate nearer to our shores. With Hawaii in our possession and well fortified, the navy of a possible Eastern foe would be practically powerless to make a successful attack upon our western coast.

The minority of the committee in the resolutions which they present practically concede that it is necessary that no foreign power should gain control of the Islands of Hawaii, but in the place of annexation they recommend a resolution declaring that the islands shall remain a separate power. Mr. Speaker, the time for such declarations as this is past. The question that confronts the American people to-day is a plain, simple one. If Hawaii is ever to be annexed to the United States, it must be done now; otherwise it is sure to pass under the control of the Japanese. To-day nothing prevents this but the fact that the Government of Hawaii has announced its desire and intention to have the islands annexed to the United States.

If annexed, the United States will settle all questions raised by them, and there need be no fear of the result. Refuse to annex them, and the weak little Republic of Hawaii can not hope to stand out against the demands of Japan that her people shall become

citizens and have a right to vote. Once given the right to vote, it does not take a prophet to tell what will be the result. Already there are nearly 25,000 Japanese in the islands. Nearly all of these are men, strong, courageous, as loyal to their nationality as Americans are to theirs. What good, Mr. Speaker, would come of a resolution passed by Congress to the effect that the Hawaiian Government should remain a separate power, if that Government passed entirely under the control of Japanese citizens? It might remain an independent Government, and yet, being controlled by the Japanese, would, for all purposes, be a part of the Japanese Empire.

Suppose that to-day, instead of being controlled by Americans, with American institutions and American inclinations, the islands were in the hands of the Japanese, and the Japanese were unfriendly to us in the war with Spain, how, under such circumstances—tell me, if you can—would we send ships with troops and supplies to aid Dewey in the far-off waters of Manila Bay? Nor is it an improbability, much less an impossibility, that the future may bring about such complications as will cause a war between this country and Japan herself. In case of such a war, will any one for a moment contend that it would be better for the Japanese to have control of the islands than for them to be a part of American territory? From such a base of operations, Japan would be so strong in naval warfare against us that our western coast would be at her mercy.

Mr. Speaker, I have not taken occasion to discuss the question raised that we have no constitutional right to annex these islands, nor will I take up the time of the House in discussing it. It must be perfectly evident to anyone that the right to extend its territory is inherent in any nation, and that it requires no special provision of the Constitution to enable us to annex additional territory. It is true this constitutional question has been raised over and over again in years past, and it is now gravely asserted in this debate that the annexation would be unconstitutional, but it is nevertheless no longer an open question.

Five times before this the question has been before the American people for decision; five times they have decided in favor of the right to annex territory, and five times have they extended

the boundaries of the United States. It is too late for anyone to take an appeal from these decisions; they are settled law, and the question can no longer be raised. A discussion of the question at this time and hereafter may be interesting from a historical point of view, but it can not now be made nor will it ever again become a practical, living question before the American people.

Mr. Speaker, 2,100 miles out in the Pacific Ocean, to the west of San Francisco, lies this group of islands, so beautiful and so attractive that they have been properly designated the "pearls of the Pacific." Lying beneath the tropical sun, yet surrounded by ocean currents which bring the cool waters of the Northwest about them, rendering the climate so pleasant that it is not injurious to anyone and is admired by all; with soil productive far beyond the conception of our own people; with beautiful lakes and sparkling rivers, and with everything that goes to make them an earthly paradise, is it any wonder that these islands proved so attractive to Americans that they made them their home, and that they are now anxious that they should become a part of their native land?

Small though the American population is, yet strong and dominant, the islands are now practically within their control. With Americans owning a large portion of the property and leading in all matters of business and enterprise, it was but natural that the profligate monarchy should be followed by a republican government in the hands of the Americans upon the islands. Long years ago their influences were asserted under the old monarchies, and for decades of the past their power has been felt in everything that has been done upon the islands. American schools were established and have flourished, until to-day the schools of the island are as well managed and as prosperous as in any American community, and compare favorably with those of the grand old State of Pennsylvania, represented by my venerable friend [Mr. Grow].

Mr. Speaker, this gallant band of Americans who have thus gained control of these islands come to us now and make us a free offering of them as a part of our national domain. True Americans at heart, they have declined to declare the neutrality of the islands during our war with Spain, and to-day our Ameri-



can ships enter the harbor of Honolulu with the same freedom and with the same feeling of security as they could any harbor under the domination of our own Government. The request of these brave men must not be turned aside.

We want these islands because of their value from a naval and military point of view; we want them on account of the rich productiveness of the soil; we want them on account of the commercial advantages which they will bring to our country; we want them in order that no foreign power may use them as a base of operations against us in time of war; we want them because they are more contiguous to our territory than to that of any other nation; we want them because they are geographically a part of the United States; but, Mr. Speaker, we want them more than all on account of the true Americans who have made their homes upon the islands and now seek to present these islands as a free offering to their mother country. Let us pass these resolutions, secure Hawaii, add to our naval and military strength, extend our commerce, and bring back again into the family fold the people who have been away from us establishing a home in these delightful islands.

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